

29 Now there was a set vessel full of vinegar : and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished : and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Golden Texts.—The Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Gal. 2 : 20.

Lesson Thought.—The cross is the symbol of all that is great in human life.

Home Readings

Christ Crucified, John 19 : 17-30.

Despised and Rejected, Luke 23 : 32-38.

The Penitent Thief, Luke 23 : 39-49.

The Burial, John 19 : 31-42.

For us, Isa. 53.

Dying for Sinners, Rom 5 : 1-11.

Introduction

The Jews rejected Pilate's offer to release Jesus and chose Barabbas instead. Preliminary to the crucifixion Pilate delivered Jesus to be scourged. The soldiers placed a crown of thorns on his head, clothed him with a purple robe, and besides mocked and abused him. After all this Pilate made another effort to have Jesus released, but the leaders of the Jews demanded his crucifixion on the ground that he claimed to be the Son of God. The thought of Jesus being the Son of God terrified Pilate, and he made another effort to set him free, but all to no purpose, for the Jews cried out the more that he should be crucified, and declared that if he set Jesus free he can not be Cæsar's friend. Pilate then yielded to the demands of the Jews and ordered his crucifixion.

The crucifixion is recorded by all four of the evangelists, but no one of them records all the incidents connected with it. It is well therefore to carefully compare the several accounts by the evangelists so as to obtain a complete knowledge of that sad tragedy which, more than anything else, has affected the destiny of man. An outline as follows includes about all the incidents connected with the crucifixion: 1. Before the crucifixion. (1) Bearing the cross; (2) the multitude following; (3) an opiate rejected. 2. The crucifixion. (1) The nails; (2) the title; (3) dividing his garments; (4) the mocking; (5) the penitent thief; (6) Mary at the cross; (7) the darkness; (8) the seven sayings on the cross. 3. After the crucifixion. (1) Various signs and portends; (2) the centurion's confession; (3) his acquaintance; (4) the pierced side; (5) the descent and burial.

The Text Explained

Verse 17. *Calvaria* is the Latin equivalent of the Hebrew *Golgotha*, from which comes our name *Calvary*. The site is not certainly known. At some point on the way the soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to help Jesus carry the cross.

18 It was 9 A. M., about the time of the morning sacrifice. Barabbas should have filled the place on the middle cross, not Jesus.

19 It was the custom to put a board on the cross above the head of the victim, announcing the crime for which the person suf-

fered death. Pilate put this title on the cross to annoy and vex the Jews who had forced a decision from him contrary to his own convictions.

20 The Romans, the Greeks and the Jews could therefore read it. *Hebrew*, for the Jews; *Latin*, for the Romans, *Greek*, for the foreigners who spoke that language. These three languages represented respectively, religion, power, and culture. "Thus to power (Latin,) to culture (Greek,) and to piety (Hebrew) was the sovereignty of Jesus declared, and it is still declared by means of such language. Power, culture and piety, in their noblest forms, pay homage at the feet of Jesus.

21 The Jews regarded the inscription as an insult to their nation.

22 In a true sense God had written those words, for Jesus was as Pilate had said, King of the Jews, tho the Roman governor did not himself believe it. The Jews can not again thwart his will as they had once done.

23 According to custom the clothes of executed criminals belonged to the soldiers who had charge of the execution. The coat without seam was the undergarment which reached from the neck to the feet.

24 The other garments had been distributed equally, but the coat being without seam would be rendered useless by rending it. Unconsciously, and with no credit to them, the soldiers fulfilled scripture. Psalm 22 : 18.

25 There were many women beholding "afar off" (Matt. 27 : 55.) Here is a little group of the most loving and devoted ones. There is no evidence that Mary was originally a woman of bad character.

26 In all his suffering Jesus thought of her whose heart was being pierced.

27 Jesus provided protection for his mother in the love of his best beloved disciple. Until the time of her death she dwelt in John's home. There is something sweet and beautiful in this filial affection of Jesus.

28 Psalm 69 : 21. In crucifixion thirst was one of the most distressing elements of the suffering.

29 A thin, sour wine, such as was ordinarily used by Roman soldiers. This seems to have an act of pity, not of mockery.

30 Jesus had completed his work on earth. He committed his spirit into the hands of the Father.

The Text Applied

1. Among some of the great reasons for the death of Jesus Christ on the cross a writer mentions the following: (1) The cause of redemption. It was the Son of God which died on the cross. (2) The terrible influence of sin to require such a redemption. (3) Our duty to accept Christ; we are bought with a price. (4) How can we make all this wonderful love and sacrifice in vain for us?

2. Jesus was stript of his garments, the garments which were his daily attire as he went about doing good, but in doing this he provided for us robes of righteousness and

garments of holiness. Have we accepted these provisions of the gospel in the death of Jesus? Thousands are making the death of Jesus of none effect so far as their own souls are concerned. The awful tragedy on Calvary, the tremendous sacrifice of Jesus, are of no avail to those who reject the offer of redemption.

3. The reader may be acquainted with the old legend that says Calvary was at the center of the world. In more than one sense is that true. Dr. J. R. Miller beautifully says: The cross was the meeting place of two eternities—a past eternity of promise and hope, and a future eternity of faith and gratitude and love. It is the center of the earth, too, because toward it all eyes of believers turn for pardon, for comfort, for light, for blessing, for joy, for hope. As from all sections of the ancient camp the bitten people look toward the brazen serpent on the pole in the center, so from all lands sin stricken ones look in their penitence and sorrow stricken ones in their grief toward the cross.

4. Jesus was made to bear his own cross on the way to the crucifixion. The burden was too heavy for his physical strength, and another was compelled to bear it for him. This however was not the weightiest burden which lay on Jesus at that auspicious moment. The burden of a sin-cursed world was resting upon his soul, and thanks be to God he did not give way under the burden, but courageously bore the burden of the world's sin. The literal cross was the symbol of the deepest and blackest shame, but since the day when Jesus died upon it it has become the symbol of all that is great and good and beautiful in this world of sin and sorrow. It now stands for more than any other one instrument. Thanks be to Christ who giveth us the victory.

5. The middle cross was the place that should have been occupied by the worst criminal, it was the place of deepest shame and dishonor. In all this there is comfort for us. Jesus reached down to the lowest depths of sin and shame from which to rescue perishing souls. One of the criminals beside him was saved, the other was lost. Both were close to Jesus, both were alike bad, the worst of sinners. The one taken, the other left. People who say they will take the chance of the dying thief will do well to look on both sides of the picture. Privileges will not save any one.

6. There are few people who come to the end of their earthly career as Jesus did. Tho he lived but thirty-three years in this earthly life, yet when the end came he could say, "It is finished." He came to do the Father's will. Each day he did the work of that day, and when the end came his life's work was done. Shall as much be said of us? When these words were spoken the work of redemption was done. The atonement for sin was made. Death may have seemed like defeat, but it was not; with a shout of victory he completed his work of